

Iowa Community Transformation Grant BIMONTHLY BRIEFING

Active Community Design with Mark Fenton

In September, national public health, planning, and transportation expert, Mark Fenton traveled to lowa to conduct the Community Transformation Grant's (CTG) one-day Active Community Design workshop. Along with staff from the 25 CTG grantee counties, community stakeholders such as elected city officials, planners, engineers, school representatives, and others - attended the workshop and formed community planning teams for each of the 25 counties represented. Each team worked together to strategize how they could improve walking and biking opportunities within their community master plans.

The interactive workshop highlighted the linkages between chronic disease and rates of physical inactivity and discussed key elements of the built environment that can encourage physical activity. Information on environmental and "systems-level" change strategies such as updated zoning, complete streets, transportation trail networks, and other resources were also covered as options for communities.

A five-person panel on lowa's Complete Streets was also featured during the day. Each panelist shared their success stories and lessons learned on implementing active transportation and physical activity into their communities.

In turn, a model walk audit was conducted by Mark and IDPH Physical Activity Consultant, Sarah Taylor Watts providing examples of improvements a community can make to their streets to facilitate safer walking and biking opportunities. Meeting attendees will be able to use the training to conduct future assessments in their own locations.

Nine statewide resource organizations were also available during the workshop for technical assistance. Some of the state partners included the lowa Department of Transportation, lowa Bicycle Coalition, Iowan Planning Association, and the USDA Rural Development.

All participants received an Active Community Design Toolkit workbook and a Spectrum of Readiness scale. Both materials are useful in assessing community design needs and what steps a community can take to implement healthier changes. The Active Community Design Toolkit and Spectrum of Readiness can be used in any community and are available for download at www.idph.state.ia.us/CTG/SafeAndHealthyEnvironments.aspx.

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Recent News

- September 30th marked the beginning of the third year (FY14) of CTG program in Iowa.
- The CTG team traveled across the state during October and November to conduct regional meetings with all of the grantee counties.
- The third phase of the "Let's Get Healthy" marketing campaign focuses on sugary beverage consumption and obesity. This phase was adapted from the "Pouring on the Pounds" campaign that has been used by several states. Local grantee counties are using the materials for billboard, radio, and print placements between October and December 2013.



The Community Transformation Grant is intended to prevent leading causes of death and disability through evidence-based initiatives, environmental and systems change, and strengthening the health infrastructure. A minimum of 50 percent of the grant funds, distributed to local boards of health, must be used for four strategic directions: Tobacco-free living, active living and healthy eating, healthy and safe physical environments, and increased use of high impact clinical prevention services.



















































































Rural County Success Story

In order to provide a safer environment for walking and biking, the Webster County CTG program partnered with the City of Fort Dodge to implement a new pedestrian walking system. Prior to installation, the coalition conducted a Walking and Biking Sustainability Assessment (WABSA) to determine locations in need for a crossing signal. They chose the entrance to the new Rosedale Aquatic Center. This location not only provides better access to the busy aquatic center, but it also helps connect it to the park and city's expanding bike trail system, which could encourage more physical activity. Since a new middle school has also opened on the same road leading to the aquatic center, crossing signals benefit additional children and pedestrians going to the school. Crossing signals were installed in August 2013.

Metropolitan County Success Story

Partnering with the lowans Fit for Life program, the Johnson County CTG staff worked with the Johnson County Alliance for Healthy Living to develop and implement a Walking School Bus pilot program at two elementary schools in Iowa City. The committee sent out interest surveys to the parents of the two schools in order to determine the need for the program and to help identify potential routes to and from school. Once the routes were mapped, CTG program staff walked the routes and used the WABSA tool to determine safety of the route.

After completing the WABSA tool for the first school, it was determined that two of the routes would have to be changed due to a lack of sidewalks in some areas. The Walking School Bus pilot program for this elementary school took place over one week and had five different routes. Turnout for the Walking School Bus was a success with approximately 30 students participated on the first day alone!

For the second participating school, the WABSA tool showed that a route required students to cross a highway but lacked enough time with the crosswalk signal to safely get to the other side. The week before this school's Walking School Bus program began, the time at the crosswalk signal was increased. This made the route much safer for students to cross the highway and participate in the program. Twelve students participate in the Walking School Bus and use the two designated routes.

Spotlight: Tips on Hosting a Walk Audit in Your Community

Walking is a great activity many adults enjoy. It is a way to be physically active that does not require any special equipment, facility, or additional people. Most adults are physically able to walk and many persons with disabilities can find a way to walk with assistance. The majority of adults, however, are still not meeting the physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week.*

A walkable community provides opportunities for residents to walk more often. One way to learn if your community is pedestrian-friendly is to get out and experience it firsthand. Walk audits are a great way to assess how easy, or difficult, it is to walk in your community. Consider organizing a walk audit to educate decision-makers on the elements of a walkable community.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

- 1. Choose an area where people walk. Spend time observing roads connecting frequented locations. Scout out the area before conducting the audit noting places to highlight along the route.
- Invite community members representing diverse sectors of the population. Include people who regularly walk, care about health or are directly affected by a poor walking environment. Also invite people who make transportation and planning decisions for the community, those who serve in leadership roles in the school, city or county, and those own a business or develop land.
- 3. Lead the group on the half-mile to two-mile route. Instruct participants to score the route as they walk, stopping several times to discuss the scores. Ask "What features of the route raised the score?" and "What lowered the score?"

FEATURES TO OBSERVE:

Sidewalks

- 1. Missing sidewalks, broken, cracked
- Width of sidewalk
- Buffered from traffic
- 4. Vegetation/cars blocking path
- 5. Appropriate curb ramps

- 1. Traffic-control devices (stop lights, pedestrian-lights, etc)
- 2. Clear view of traffic
- Number of lanes, bike lanes
- Painted crosswalks
- 5. Medians (slow traffic, help pedestrians cross safely)

Route

- 1. Attractive landscape, pleasant conditions
- Transit use
- Adequate lighting
- Connection to residential, retail, schools, recreation, worksites
- 5. Behavior of pedestrians and drivers
- 6. Speed and amount of traffic

For other tips on how to conduct a walk audit, please visit the lowans Fit for Life "Walking with a Purpose" toolkit at www.idph.state.ia.us/iowansfitforlife/community.asp.

www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/Walking/









